

Message Text

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ORIGIN ACDA-12

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INFO USDEL MBFR VIENNA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY SOFIA PRIORITY

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USSALTTWO/CTB

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PARM, SOPN

SUBJECT: APRIL 3 ROUNDUP: PRESS ITEMS OF ARMS CONTROL
INTEREST

LONDON FOR AMB/EX, SOFIA FOR AMBASSADOR

1. HENRY TREWHITT OF BALTIMORE SUN REPORTED THAT U.S. HAS
STRENGTHENED ITS TERMS FOR CONTROL OF BACKFIRE BOMBER IN
NEXT ARMS CONTROL PACKAGE. TREWHITT REPORTED THAT "ACCORD-
ING TO PAUL H. NITZE, FORMER SALT NEGOTIATOR, U.S. NOW
ARGUES THAT RESTRICTIONS ON BACKFIRE SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN
DOCUMENT SIGNED BY BOTH SIDES, SUBJECT TO CONGRESSIONAL
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APPROVAL, AND THUS EQUIVALENT TO PROTOCOL TO SALT TREATY.
THAT KIND OF ARRANGEMENT IS NECESSARY, AN AMERICAN OFFICIAL
ARGUED, IF NEXT TREATY IS TO RECEIVE SENATE APPROVAL.
EARLIER U.S. WAS REPORTED READY TO ACCEPT LESS FORMAL
SOVIET ASSURANCE THAT BACKFIRE WOULD BE DEPLOYED AS
MEDIUM-RANGE WEAPON, NOT AGAINST U.S..... AN ADMINISTRATION
OFFICIAL REFUSED TO CONFIRM MR. NITZE'S VERSION OF TERMS

FOR CONTROL OF BACKFIRE. BUT NEITHER DID HE CHALLENGE IT, AND HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT U.S. PROPOSALS HAVE BEEN, AS HE PUT IT, 'BEEFED UP.'"

2. ARTHUR COX, WASHINGTON WRITER AND CONSULTANT SPECIALI-

ZING IN SOVIET AFFAIRS, DISCUSSING BACKFIRE ISSUE, SAID "IT WOULD BE TRAGIC IF THIS PHONY CONTROVERSY SHOULD CONTINUE TO IMPEDE PROGRESS" TOWARD NEW SALT AGREEMENT. HE LOOKED AT BACKFIRE QUESTION IN SOME DETAIL IN ARTICLE PUBLISHED SUNDAY IN WASHINGTON POST. COX RECALLED THAT 1974 VLADIVOSTOK AGREEMENT WAS NEVER IMPLEMENTED BECAUSE USSR "REALIZED BELATEDLY THAT U.S. HAD TECHNOLOGICAL CAPABILITY TO PRODUCE CRUISE MISSILES OF STRATEGIC RANGE, AND CRUISE MISSILES WERE NOT COVERED IN AGREEMENT. SOVIETS THEREFORE INSISTED THAT RANGE LIMITS FOR U.S. CRUISE MISSILES BE ESTABLISHED AND THAT U.S. B-52 BOMBERS ARMED WITH CRUISE MISSILES BE INCLUDED IN MIRV TOTAL. RECOGNIZING VALIDITY OF SOVIET CLAIMS, U.S. COUNTERED WITH DEMAND THAT RECENTLY DEPLOYED SOVIET BACKFIRE BOMBER BE COUNTED AS STRATEGIC WEAPON. THUS, FUNDAMENTAL IMPASSE WAS CREATED. SOVIETS WERE ANGERED BY THIS BARGAINING PLOY, INSISTING THAT BACKFIRE WAS MEDIUM-RANGE BOMBER." COX SAID U.S. KNEW BACKFIRE'S SPECIFICATIONS WELL IN ADVANCE OF VLADIVOSTOK MEETING, AND "AT NO TIME DURING VLADIVOSTOK DID U.S. REFER TO UNCLASSIFIED

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BACKFIRE AS STRATEGIC.... HAD BACKFIRE BEEN MADE AN ISSUE BY U.S. AT VLADIVOSTOK, SOVIETS WOULD HAVE INSISTED ON INCLUSION OF U.S. FORWARD-BASED FIGHTER-BOMBERS." COX POINTED OUT THAT CARTER ADMINISTRATION, IN ITS MARCH, 1977 COMPREHENSIVE PROPOSAL IN MOSCOW, "RETURNED TO 1974 PRE-VLADIVOSTOK POSITION THAT BACKFIRE IS MEDIUM-RANGE BOMBER." HE NOTED THAT IN PENTAGON'S 1978 DEFENSE POSTURE STATEMENT "STRATEGIC FORCE LEVELS LISTED FOR USSR EXCLUDE BACKFIRE BOMBER." NEVERTHELESS, COX SAID, THAT STATEMENT ALSO SAID IF EVENTUAL SALT TWO AGREEMENT MEETS U.S. EXPECTATIONS, IT WILL PLACE SOME LIMITS ON BACKFIRE. "CARTER AND BROWN, THOUGH RECOGNIZING THAT BACKFIRE IS NOT STRATEGIC BOMBER, ARE STILL TRYING TO ACCOMMODATE HAWKS IN CONGRESS.... BACKFIRE HAS NEVER BEEN STRATEGIC BOMBER. CARTER ADMINISTRATION RECOGNIZES THAT FACT. TIME HAS COME FOR PRESIDENT AND HIS TOP ADVISERS TO SAY SO TO CONGRESS AND AMERICAN PEOPLE. THIS CHARADE, WHICH HAS BLOCOKED PROGRESS FOR THREE AND HALF YEARS, SHOULD BE STOPPED NOW."

3. UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL REPORTED THAT SOVIET UNION IS IMPROVING ACCURACY OF ITS WEAPONS FASTER THAN

HAD BEEN EXPECTED. UPI SAID AVIATION WEEK REPORTED TODAY THAT SIX RECENT TESTS OF USSR'S LATE MODEL SS-18 AND SS-19 ICBM'S SHOW WEAPONS MAY BE AS ACCURATE AS U.S. MISSILES. NEWER MISSILES WERE KNOWN TO BE MORE ACCURATE THAN EARLIER MODELS, CAPABLE OF STRIKING WITHIN POSSIBLY 1,800 FEET OF TARGET, BUT LATEST INFORMATION INDICATES MISSILES MAY BE EVEN MORE ACCURATE THAN ORIGINALLY

BELIEVED. DEFENSE SOURCES SAID "SOVIETS MAY ACHIEVE (HIGH) ACCURACY COUPLE OF YEARS EARLIER THAN WE HAD ORIGINALLY EXPECTED -- 1983 TIME FRAME INSTEAD OF 1985 TIME FRAME." SOME PRESENT GENERATION SOVIET MISSILES CANNOT RELIABLY HIT WITHIN NAUTICAL MILE OF TARGET.

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4. RICHARD BURT OF NEW YORK TIMES SAID SECRETARY VANCE HAS "PROVOKED FURIOUS CRITICISM FROM PENTAGON" BY ASKING PRESIDENT TO EXPEDITE ACDA PROPOSAL CALLING FOR INTERNATIONAL BAN ON PRODUCTION OF MATERIAL USED IN NUCLEAR WEAPONS. BURT QUOTED STATE DEPARTMENT OFFICIALS AS SAYING VANCE, IN LETTER TO WHITE HOUSE, ASKED THAT TEAM BE ASSEMBLED IN COMING WEEKS THAT WOULD EXAMINE HOW TO CARRY OUT PROPOSAL THAT NATIONS THAT NOW HAVE NUCLEAR WEAPONS CEASE PRODUCTION OF PLUTONIUM AND ENRICHED URANIUM FOR MILITARY PURPOSES. OFFICIALS SAID PLAN, TOGETHER WITH VANCE'S LETTER, ORIGINATED IN ACDA. "SPECIALISTS THERE ARE SAID TO HOPE THAT IT WILL WIN QUICK PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL SO THAT IT CAN BE UNVEILED AT U.N. SSOD THAT IS SCHEDULED FOR LATE MAY," BURT SAID. IN HIS LETTER, VANCE SAID PROPOSED BAN WOULD SERVE "PRIMARY REQUIREMENT" OF HALTING SPREAD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND ALSO WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH OTHER DISARMAMENT INITIATIVES, BURT REPORTED. "HOWEVER, DEFENSE DEPARTMENT IS STRONGLY OPPOSED TO PLAN AND ITS OFFICIALS ARE UPSET THAT THEY ONLY LEARNED OF VANCE LETTER AFTER IT HAD BEEN SUBMITTED TO WHITE HOUSE," BURT REPORTED. IN LETTER TO BRZEZINSKI, DEFENSE SECRETARY BROWN SAID NUCLEAR PRODUCTION BAN WAS PROPOSED WHEN U.S. POSSESSED NUCLEAR SUPERIORITY OVER SOVIET UNION AND THAT IT WAS NO LONGER RELEVANT IN PRESENT ERA OF "STRATEGIC EQUIVALENCE." SAYING HIS VIEWS WERE SHARED BY JCS, BROWN SAID IF SALT TWO ACCORD IS NOT REACHED, U.S. MIGHT HAVE AN INCREASED REQUIREMENT FOR NEW NUCLEAR MATERIALS. ALSO, HE SAID, PROBLEMS OF POLICING NUCLEAR PRODUCTION BAN WOULD BE "OVERWHELMING."

5. DAVID SHIPLER OF NEW YORK TIMES REPORTED FROM MOSCOW SATURDAY THAT SOVIET UNION HAS AGREED TO AN AMERICAN
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CAN PROPOSAL TO BEGIN TALKS TO BAN HUNTER-KILLER SATELLITES IN SPACE. HE SAID KREMLIN'S WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE HAS BEEN FORMALLY CONVEYED TO WASHINGTON, ACCORDING TO SENIOR WESTERN DIPLOMAT. "ALTHOUGH ADMINISTRATION APPARENTLY HOPED THAT TALKS COULD BEGIN IN APRIL, THERE WAS NO WORD HERE ON HOW SOON RUSSIANS WOULD BE READY.... IT WAS NOT CLEAR HOW EXTENSIVE TREATY WOULD BE -- WHETHER IT WOULD COVER ONLY HUNTER-KILLER SATELLITES OR ALSO GROUND-BASED ANTISATELLITE WEAPONS SUCH AS POWERFUL LASER BEAMS, WHICH PENTAGON OPPOSES BANNING."

6. RICHARD BURT OF NEW YORK TIMES REPORTED SATURDAY THAT THERE IS "WIDE AGREEMENT" IN ADMINISTRATION THAT CARTER MUST DECIDE QUICKLY WHAT TO DO ABOUT NEUTRON WARHEAD BEFORE IT AGAIN BECOMES SUBJECT OF DEBATE IN CONGRESS AND "CASTS SHADOW OVER NATO'S SUMMIT MEETING LATE IN MAY. OFFICIALS ACKNOWLEDGE THAT -- REGARDLESS OF WHEN WHITE HOUSE MAKES UP ITS MIND ON ISSUE -- CONTROVERSY GENERATED BY NEUTRON BOMB HAS LEFT DEEP SCAR IN ALLIANCE RELATIONS, RAISING DOUBTS IN EUROPEAN CAPITALS OVER MR. CARTER'S DECISIVENESS AND WILLINGNESS TO TAKE LEAD ON DIFFICULT DEFENSE MATTERS. THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT IN ADMINISTRATION THAT HANDLING OF ISSUE HAS UNDERMINED CREDIBILITY OF MR. CARTER'S COMMITMENT TO STRONGER NATO TIES."

7. JONATHAN KANDELL, IN DISPATCH FROM PARIS TO NEW YORK TIMES, SAID WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES HAVE INCREASED THEIR EXPORTS OF ARMAMENTS AND IN SOME CASES ARE RUSHING TO FILL GAP IN PLACES WHERE U.S. HAS SOUGHT TO LIMIT ITS SALES. CHRISTOPHER

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